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GATEWAY TO IMPERIAL COUNTY

CALEXICO

## Port loses funds in cuts

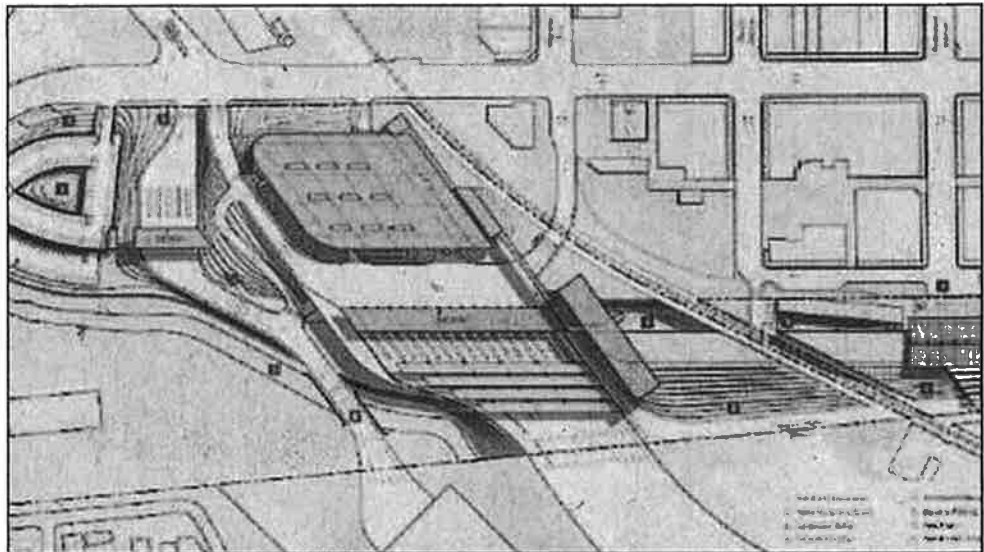
House votes to kill funding for port of entry project

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A plan for an expanded downtown Calexico Port of Entry could be dead, though local officials say they'll fight to the end to keep the money.

The House of Representatives voted Tuesday to kill funding for the Calexico Port of Entry project, U.S. Rep. Bob Filner, D-Chula Vista, announced.

The project includes new pedestrian processing and vehicle inspection facilities and new administration offices. The first phase would increase southbound lanes from two to five and northbound lanes from 10 to 16.



This artist rendering depicts the planned port of entry work. IVP FILE PHOTO

The House Republicans passed a resolution Tuesday to eliminate \$894 million — \$84 million for the Calexico project — from the General Service Administration construction and acquisition budget, according to a press release from Filner's office.

The House's drastic cut to the GSA budget means the Calexico port project cannot advance as planned, Filner said in a statement.

"Not only will Imperial County lose jobs associated with the construction, but our economy will continue to suffer from the loss of efficiency at the border," said Filner, who voted against the proposed cut. "The House Repub-

licans' 'so be it' attitude toward jobs is unconscionable."

The cut really puts a damper on a lot of projects, especially locally with the port, Calexico Mayor John Moreno said.

He said he hopes the city can continue to work on plans for the project because of the drastic impact cutting the port project would cause, he said. Not only does it mean longer wait times, but all the jobs for construction that were set to start this year aren't going to happen.

"This is really going to affect Calexico and the Imperial Valley economy as a whole," he said.

The House vote was a disappointment, but the

bill still needs to go before the Senate, said county Supervisor John Renison, who also serves as chairman of the Border Counties Coalition. He said he doesn't think California's senators would betray the area by voting to eliminate the funding.

"If you want to make things more efficiently, and you want to make border communities more economical, you fund ports of entry," he said.

A vote could come as early as this week. And from here the plan is to "fight like heck," he said. "We have to."